



U.S. Department of Justice  
United States Attorney  
District of Kansas

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### SIX PLEAD GUILTY IN COUNTERFEIT CHECK SCHEME

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **William Cunningham**, 29, Kansas City, Missouri, **Derek Mayfield**, 32, Kansas City, Missouri, **Joseph Flowers**, 28, Kansas City, Kansas, **Vernell Murphy**, 53, Kansas City, Missouri, **Michael Clemmons**, 31, Kansas City, Missouri, and **Yixin Zhu**, 42, Kansas City, Missouri, each entered guilty pleas today before U.S. District Judge G. Thomas VanBebber.

Melgren stated that this was an eight month investigation by the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, the Overland Park Police Department, and the Olathe Police Department, with the assistance of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service into a counterfeit check scheme that was operating in Kansas and Missouri that resulted in a loss of approximately \$500,000. These counterfeit checks were passed at banks in Kansas City, Prairie Village, Olathe, Overland Park, Fairway, Shawnee and Topeka.

Melgren said that **Cunningham** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Cunningham admitted at his plea that he printed a counterfeit check on his computer that he provided to Vernell Murphy and that on December 13, 2002, Murphy cashed the \$5,550.50 counterfeit check purportedly issued by Trac-Excel, a business in Overland Park, Kansas, at the Bank of Blue Valley, Olathe, Kansas. Cunningham faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole.

**Mayfield** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Mayfield admitted at his plea that he provided Michael Clemmons a \$2,155.00 counterfeit check purportedly issued by the Jewish Community Campus of Kansas City and that on November 27, 2002, Clemmons cashed the counterfeit check at Hillcrest Bank, Olathe, Kansas. Mayfield faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole.

**Flowers** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting another in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Flowers admitted that on January 7, 2003, he

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drove another individual to the Columbian Bank & Trust Company in Topeka, Kansas, and waited in the car for her to cash a counterfeit check for \$5,000 that was purportedly issued by Columbian Title of Kansas City. Flowers faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole.

**Murphy** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Murphy admitted at her plea that on November 29, 2002, she passed three counterfeit checks purportedly issued by Concannon Group of Companies, Inc., Kansas City, Kansas, at three different branches of the First National Bank of Kansas located in Overland Park and Fairway, Kansas. Murphy faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole.

**Clemmons** entered a guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to possess and pass counterfeit checks. Clemmons admitted at his plea that on November 27, 2002, he cashed a counterfeit check for \$2,155 purportedly issued by the Jewish Community Campus of Kansas City at the Hillcrest Bank, Olathe, Kansas. Clemmons faces a maximum of five years in federal prison without parole.

**Yixin Zhu** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Zhu admitted at his plea that on December 7, 2002, he cashed a counterfeit check for \$5,500 purportedly issued by Alvamar at the Emprise Bank, Lawrence, Kansas. Zhu faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole.

All six are set for sentencing on December 15, 2003.

Co-defendant **James Hughes**, 23, Kansas City, Missouri, is currently set for a court hearing on September 29, 2003. The charges against Joegina Davis were dismissed in federal court and she was prosecuted in Shawnee County District Court. An additional twenty people were charged in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas and Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties in Missouri with passing counterfeit checks as part of this conspiracy.

Melgren commended the excellent work of all the law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Leon Patton in this prosecution.